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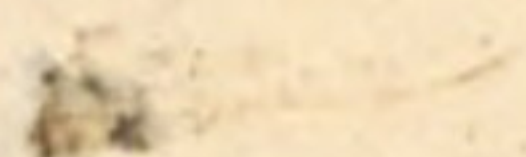
A
L E T T E R
TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDMUND BURKE.

THE SECOND EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONS.

L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT,
OPPOSITE BURLINGTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

M.DCC.XCI.

LETTER



TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE

THE SECOND EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS.

LONDON.

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON,

STATIONER, BOND STREET, PICCADILLY.

MDCCLXXXII.

A

L E T T E R, &c.

BELONGING to no party, addicted to no sect; and too old not rather to fear than to invite notoriety of any sort, may I not hope from among the few incitements which could induce such a man in love with retirement to obtrude himself on the public eye that I shall be allowed to assume the desire of being useful as my sole motive? “Conscious,” to speak in the language of Lord Bacon, “that what I shall offer arises from no
“vein of popularity, ostentation, desire
“of novelty, partiality to either side, dis-
A 2 “ position

“ position to intermeddle, or any the like
 “ leaven ; I conceive hopes that what I
 “ want in depth of understanding may be
 “ countervailed by simplicity and sincerity
 “ of affection.” Sure I am, Sir, that such
 a disposition will find favour in your sight ;
 that I shall meet you ready to admit that
 men may honestly differ on topics where
 the conclusions lie at such a distance from
 the premises, and where the best abilities
 and the best intentions setting out from
 the same center have been found to di-
 varicate into every point of the compass.

Permit me, Sir, before I proceed, to
 offer you the humble tribute of my ap-
 plause. I have for many years been
 amongst the foremost of your admirers.
 I have seen you with uninterrupted energy
 pursue the right, straight forward, and
 fearless

fearless of consequences. I have seen you the soul of a great enterprize, which though "offences' gilded hand may shove
 "by justice," or "the wicked prize itself
 "buy out the law," will secure immortality to your name. When I differ from you in opinion, I am with you in sentiment. I regard you as one of the best and ablest men of our day.

You have published a work abounding with eloquence learning knowledge and every other excellence to be foretold of the production of a mind furnished like yours. But in the midst of much good and sound doctrine are maxims and positions which I think may be used by the worst of men for the worst of purposes. The more you possess of those qualifications which give the opinion of one man authority over the reason

son

son of others, the more I feel it a duty, thinking as I do, to combat to the best of my power these dangerous tenets; to warn those who are about to feed upon your well-flavoured and high-seasoned dish that “there is death in the pot.” Answerers you will have in plenty of various descriptions with various motives, some of them most probably of much better abilities than I can pretend to; but I will cede to none of them in simplicity and purity of intention, or in respect for the person and character of the excellent man with whom I find myself so reluctantly obliged to differ.

To follow you, *non passibus æquis*, over the wide and flowery field where you disport yourself with so much dexterity and grace is by no means my intention.

I am

I am not one of those who having taken a part have an answer ready for every thing which can be offered on the other side. In many things I agree with you most heartily, and the high approbation I feel of much of your work gives me the more confidence where I am obliged to dissent. I have strong doubts and offer them as such in fair discussion. I will endeavour to be as short as the time allotted me will allow of, for it belongs only to your pen to be diffuse without being tedious.

It is, I think, the peculiar infirmity of noble and ardent minds to run into extremes; to follow even the right too far. You are disgusted with the folly and danger of wild theories and extravagant projects, and would therefore reduce the
science

science of government to a mere craft and mystery; but politics must have some abstract principles *. Though slavery must

* The most measured and technical writers have been forced to consider natural liberty and the *rights of men* as preceding all civil institutions. Sir William Blackstone, who has never passed for a light or factious writer, speaks thus: " Thus much for the *declaration* of our rights and
 " liberties. The rights themselves, thus defined by these
 " several statutes, consist in a number of private immuni-
 " ties, which will appear from what has been premised to
 " be indeed no other than either that *residuum* of natural
 " liberty which is not required by the laws of society to
 " be sacrificed to public convenience, or else those civil
 " privileges which society hath engaged to provide
 " in lieu of the natural liberties so given up by indivi-
 " duals. These therefore were formerly either by inhe-
 " ritance or purchase the *rights of all mankind*; but in
 " most other countries of the world, being now more or
 " less debased and destroyed, they may at present be said
 " to remain in a peculiar and emphatical manner the
 " rights of the people of England."

Montesquieu in his admirable Spirit of Laws treats this subject with his usual neatness and perspicuity:

" Les etres particuliers intelligens peuvent avoir des loix
 qu'ils

be felt by the people it may be foretold by the sage. To prophecy of such events certainly much sagacity and much experience and much moderation are required, and many false prophets will arise who will deceive many ; but this is equally true in morality, religion, and every thing else that cannot be made the immediate object of demonstration ; and yet these are all reducible to some great and general truths which when understood will be as universally assented to as that the three

“ qu'ils ont faites ; mais ils en ont aussi qu'ils n'ont pas
 “ faites. Avant qu'il y eût des etres intelligens, ils
 “ etoient possibles ; ils avoient donc des rapports possibles
 “ et par consequens des lois possibles. Avant qu'il y
 “ eût des loix faites il y avoit des rapports de justice
 “ possibles. Dire qu'il n'y a rien de juste ni d'injuste que
 “ ce qu'ordonnent ou defendent les loix positives, c'est
 “ dire qu'avant qu'on eut tracé de circle tous les rayons
 “ n'etoient pas egaux.” Esp. des Lois, liv. i. chap. i.

B

angles

angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones. The science of politics may indeed be properly enough considered as a subdivision of moral Philosophy, capable of being treated synthetically with much advantage at this moment. What has happened in our own view in America, in Ireland, in France are great and pregnant experiments. A treatise to which the proper title would be *The Philosophy of Politics*, executed as I conceive it might be, would form an excellent and most useful work.

If the principles of the Revolution Club are as you tell us, but as I do not know that they acknowledge them to be, that the people of these realms are in a constant and habitual right and practice of * “choosing

* Page 20.

“ their

“ their own governors”—“ of cashiering
 “ them for misconduct”—“ of framing
 “ a new government;” such solecisms
 in reason and fact seem scarcely to de-
 serve a serious answer. The mischief of
 these doctrines, merges in their absurd-
 ity. Is it not obvious to the slightest
 observation that before the people (who-
 ever they are) can exercise the least of
 these powers, all those of the actual con-
 stitution must be suspended or done away;
 a complete revolution must have already
 taken place? What do they mean by the
 people? Where does this fourth estate
 exist? How is its collective voice to be
 taken or its collective force to act?
 Where has it so long lain perdue, and
 from whence does it now come like the
 army in the Rehearsal “ to the door and

“ in disguise ?” When state quacks prescribe these recipes, I believe if they were told like their predecessor in Moliere, Why, Doctor, this is a Revolution ! they would answer as he does—a Revolution ! aye, Sir, and what is better than a Revolution ! I strongly suspect that all the sense (if they have any) of these unintelligible theories and vicious circles of the governed governing the governors might be comprized in a plain proposition to which I for one would give my hearty assent ; that when government under any form or denomination offers oppression in the room of protection and injury instead of justice ; a stone for bread and a serpent for a fish ; such government ought to be resisted with all the powers which God and nature have placed in our hands.

For

For this great and grievous disease a revolution is the only true specific.

Since I have mentioned the Revolution Club, I must say that I think you treat Dr. Price's *nunc dimittis** with very undeserved asperity. If you think he errs, his error can only be fairly attributed to a little too much ardour in a good cause. All enthusiasm is certainly excess ; it begins where reason ends ; but an enthusiastic love of liberty has always been reckoned amongst the most useful and respectable insanities of the human mind. The Doctor and many others with him will think, that to hinder the King from erecting the royal standard at Metz was of the last importance to the embryon liberties of France. They will think that an immediate and

* Page 96.

most probably a very bloody civil war was cheaply prevented by the excesses of the mob at Versailles on the 6th of October. They will consider the degradation of the King with some sort of complacency, not as you say by reducing him to his qualities of man or animal, for it is under these titles only which he holds in common with all of us that he can claim any pity at all; but because they see in his person the actual living representative of an oppressive and intolerable despotism; the descendant of old and the progenitor of future tyrants. A pious divine where he thinks he beholds so much salvation, will very naturally break out into thanks to God for what he believes to have been brought about by the immediate interposition of his providence. Grave and religious men and lovers of or-
der

der too have burst into ejaculations on the recovery of liberty before Dr. Price. A great antient *aristocrat*, whose authority I believe you esteem more than I do, employs a still higher strain on a much more violent occasion. Speaking of the killing of Julius in the Capitol, he says, What was there ever performed, O holy Jupiter! not only in this city but in the whole world greater, what more glorious, what more worthy of the eternal remembrance of mankind *!

For my own part I cannot apprehend any such danger as you seem to fear from allowing men to speculate on the common-

* Quæ enim res unquam, proh sanctæ Jupiter! non modo in hac urbe, sed in omnibus terris est gesta major, quæ gloriosior, quæ commendatior hominum memoriæ sempiternæ! Cic.

wealth as much as they please. Speeches and sermons and pamphlets will produce but little effect, except where they find the minds of men predisposed and ripe for the subject. The business is already done before they can operate to any strong purpose. They will only be seriously attended to when they give vent to some passion or furnish some plausible argument or excuse for what we are beforehand determined upon. While the people are happy and free, they will no more be made to believe themselves oppressed and enslaved, than all the oratory in the world will persuade slaves and beggars that they are rich and content.

When you boast to your French correspondent with such an air of triumphant confidence of the loyalty, the “religious
“zeal,

“ zeal *,” the obedience, the “ simplicity,
 “ the *bonhomie* of the British † charac-
 “ ter,” their “ awe of kings” and reve-
 “ rence for priests ‡,” their “ sullen re-
 “ sistance of innovation ||,” their unalter-
 able perseverance in the “ wisdom of pre-
 “ judice for the last four hundred years § ;”
 are you not a little apprehensive lest he
 should retort upon you the seven interrup-
 tions of the hereditary succession previous
 to the revolution, the public execution of
 one king and the banishment of another
 a little before that period, and the priva-
 tion and exile of a whole line of kings im-
 mediately afterwards, four radical and en-
 tire changes of religion in three successive
 reigns, papist under Harry the first de-
 fender of the romish faith, and then pro-

* Page 135. † P. 133. ‡ P. 128. || P. 127. § P. 130.

testant under the same Harry the first defender of the protestant faith, violently papist again under his daughter the bloody Mary, and once more protestant under her sister Elizabeth, presbyterian under Oliver and the Commonwealth, anglican and episcopal at the restoration, high church under Anne, and low church under the first Georges, and at this very moment separated into as many sects as there are shades of opinion between the wide extremes of bigotry and infidelity?

If a free and equal constitution could have been erected in France on the foundation of the old establishment, I am ready to allow that to level all without distinction was a rash and dangerous experiment. But this does not appear to have been the case. A century and half of despotism had so warped
and

and moulded every institution to the support of the omnipotence of the crown, and to the annihilation of the liberty of the subject, that they could not be used for the contrary purposes. If the four estates had continued to meet in their antient form, the nobles, the church and the crown possessing each of them powers utterly inconsistent with a free constitution, would have united to render the representatives of the people, *le tiers état*, a mere nullity. The change from liberty to slavery may proceed by silent lapse, but illegitimate force must be wrenched by violence from the strong hand of power. The tyranny of France could only be overturned by the great mass of the people. When this vast and unwieldy machine is once set in motion, no mortal arm can exactly direct its

force, or determine its momentum. We know that mankind in the aggregate must be forced into activity by the immediate impulse of some strong passion, and that their action will therefore always be accompanied with some violence and some excess. We know too that change itself cannot be wrought without disturbance and disorder; the decomposition and combination of elements will be attended with commotion and effervescence. But where much is to be obtained much may and ought to be hazarded: the utmost that human prudence can provide against future contingencies is to secure the probabilities, the rest must necessarily be left to the great arbiters time and chance, to eventual courage and eventual ability. The destruction of an inveterate tyranny, and
the

the probable establishment of a free constitution must be always considered as cheaply purchased at the expence of a few years of anarchy and disorder. In all ages those citizens who shall obtain for their country such advantages at such a price, will continue to be ranked among the great benefactors of mankind.

The question then is reduced to this, whether the late government of France was such as ought to have been endured. It must, I think, appear to every man who acknowledges the inestimable value of a free constitution that it was not. A government where the foundation of all law is comprized in one short formula, FOR SUCH IS OUR PLEASURE—CAR TEL EST NOTRE PLAISIR; where the personal liberty and consequently the property and
life

life of every individual is held at the absolute will and disposal of one man, is a government shocking to the common sense and common feelings of mankind. Neither the hereditary succession of ages nor the acquiescence of millions can sanctify abuse or change evil into good. Wrong may be endured, but it cannot be established. A bond in which no valuable consideration has been retained by one of the contracting parties is void in law as well as in equity. Possession and prescription may be good titles *primâ facie*, but they must give way when higher claims and better rights are produced. I would consider it as a *datum* confirmed by the general sense and experience of mankind in all ages, that an absolute, or as you are pleased to call it, an *unqualified monarchy* is

is no where to be suffered. The preservation of no order no establishment can compensate for this enormous evil. Every humane mind will anticipate with heartfelt satisfaction the approach of that day when the race of despots shall have disappeared from the face of the earth ; and when by their rusty coins and mutilated statues they shall be known to have existed, it shall be said of them as of the giants of old, “ in those days there were “ tyrants in the land.”

Will you permit me, Sir, to hazard a conjecture ? Twenty years ago you would not have thought of this revolution as you do now. In the sage caution I think may be discerned something of the timidity of age ; some traces perhaps of the strong impression made upon your vivid imagination

gination by the violences to which you were an eye witness in the summer of 1780. In your dread of disorder and misrule you would counsel rather to bear the ills we have of what magnitude soever, *quemvis durare laborem*, than fly to others that we know not of. “ Your resolution “ is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of “ thought.”

As the source of the revolution in France seems to have been purer, so its process has hitherto appeared milder than any in ancient or modern story. The journal of the siege of Londonderry furnishes more horrors than all that we know of this great event. A few obnoxious heads and some voluntary banishments have been the only sacrifices to vengeance and the infernal gods. Nor can these be fairly attributed
to

to any new spirit infused into the people by the disorder of the times. The execution of M. Foulon cannot be compared for atrocity with that of the Marechal D'Ancre, or the massacre of the King's guards with the night of St. Bartholomew. And yet these happened before the baleful atmosphere of philosophy, the *azote* in which no virtuous or salutary prejudice can continue to breathe, had poisoned the minds of men *. When those very principles of loyalty and gallantry whose fall you so tenderly lament were yet in their meridian splendour.

The humiliation of a King and the terror of a Queen form under your pencil a very pathetic picture ; a tragic and affecting lesson of the instability of human

* Page 132.

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greatness.

greatness. You seem to consider these great personages, what in the day of their prosperity they are always ready enough to consider themselves, as above vulgar humanity. In their sufferings I fear they found that they were mere mortals. For my part so far from looking upon those who are born to crowns as beings of a superior nature, I think they have not the common chance with the rest of mankind. It is out of our weaknesses and wants, the sweet intercourse of services and benefits, that all the social ties of charity and benevolence are formed. Men will feel for others what they apprehend for themselves ;

— Non ignara mali miseris succurere disco—

They will labour to obtain a superiour rank among their fellow mortals by superiority

riority in learning or wisdom or courage or usefulness or virtue. But kings as they are above the social necessities so they are above the social feelings of life. Having no equal they can have no friend nor no competitor ; and standing on the pinnacle of greatness, to labour for any higher elevation by the common means of eminence must appear to them like adding

—————another hue

Unto the rainbow, or with taper light

Seeking the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish;

A wasteful and ridiculous excess.—————

As to the unhappy beauty whose charms so well deserve to be recorded in the sweet strain of your eloquence, I most sincerely join with you in pitying her distress because I conceive it must be very poignant. When you go forth the knight of this fair unfor-

fortunate, I shall be proud to be your squire. In the mean time I do very truly hope, that together with the dignity of sentiment becoming her high birth and station, she also enjoys the heart-felt satisfaction to reflect that she has not by her own conduct contributed to her own misfortunes ; that it is over her distresses only and not over her faults that her friends and admirers would wish to draw a veil.

But let us turn from this sad lesson for kings, where we are constrained to pity what we cannot much esteem, to the most magnificent spectacle that has ever presented itself to the human eye. A great and generous nation animated with one soul, rising up as one man to demand the restitution of their natural rights. When it was once determined that a free constitution would

would be had, I have endeavoured to shew by a short argument that the nobles and clergy could not with any safety be allowed to enter the fortrefs in embodied strength. Their exclusive privileges and oppressive territorial jurisdictions were among the grievances most immediately felt by the people. They presented an eternal barrier to any substantial amendment of the condition of the commons. It is to know little of the temper of men born to high sounding titles and lofty pretensions, to suppose that these bodies, possessing a commanding voice in the legislature, would have made a voluntary surrender of antient powers and splendid distinctions derived to them through a long succession of ancestry, merely because these powers appeared incompatible with
a free

a free constitution. They must, on the common principles of prudence habit and inclination have sided with the crown against the people. In this country it had been the policy of one of our antient tyrants, under their old maxim *divide & impera*, to strengthen the hands of the commons by way of counter-balance to the haughty and ungoverned claims of his feudal Barons *. From this
 impure

* By the statute *De donis*, estates tail were rendered unalienable, and the large domains were of course settled in perpetuity. By the decision of the judges in *Taltarum's case*, 12 Edw. IV. common recoveries were allowed to bar an estate tail; and by the statute of 26 Hen. VIII. they were declared to be forfeited to the King in cases of high treason. By different statutes of Hen. VII. and Hen. VIII. a fine levied by a tenant in tail is allowed to be a complete bar to him and his heirs, and all other persons. Sir William Blackstone observes (2d Comm. 118), that it was the policy of Hen. VII. to lay the road as open as possible to the alienation of landed property.

impure source much good eventually flowed, that was certainly neither intended nor foreseen by the monarch of that day. The rank and title of nobility soon ceased to have any connection with territorial jurisdiction, and became attached simply to a legislative and judicial peerage. Rich and powerful commoners and a substantial independent yeomanry began to form a real balance to the aristocratic part of the constitution; in process of time it became the interest of both to unite, to circumscribe the unbounded pretensions of the crown. In this country every man who is not an actual member of the house of peers is a commoner. Every peer is born a commoner, and perty, in order to weaken the overgrown power of his nobles.

most

most of them have been at one time or other members of the house of commons in their own persons; so that they carry up something of a popular spirit into the aristocratical assembly. Many of the leading men in the lower house look up to the peerage either as their hereditary right or as the ultimate reward of their public services; an aristocratic tendency has therefore always prevailed among the representatives of the people. The fact is that nothing of pure democracy or pure monarchy or pure aristocracy in a distinct or separate state is to be found in our Constitution. The three principles are blended and tempered together into one common mass. They hold a joint undivided property. No line of demarcation can possibly be drawn between them; nor can they ever be played off

off against one another. This is one of the beautiful anomalies of the English government which disdains all the fixed and known rules of political grammar. This is the *unity of interest* which is the soul of our great drama; the key-stone of the arch; the centripetal force that confines these eccentric bodies within their orbits. Hence the extreme inequality of representation which sounds so ill in theory almost disappears in practice. The fabric exists in unimpaired beauty and strength, not as is commonly supposed by preserving the balance between contending and discordant principles, but by the firm unison and strong texture of correspondent and homogeneous parts. It may and probably will sooner or later be sapped by corruption, and its main timbers con-

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sumed

sumed by the dry rot of influence; but it has nothing to fear from wild theory or treacherous ingenuity, from the cashiers of Kings or the assertors of passive obedience and divine hereditary right.

The government of France exhibited the direct contrary of all this; an *unqualified* monarchy, a feudal nobility, a domineering hierarchy, an impoverished and servile people. Divided interest and disjointed power. What was there here so well worth preserving? Were these the corner stones upon which you would have laid the foundation of a free constitution? By what common ties of advantage, what chain of gradual dependencies would you have held these irreconcilable parts, these jarring elements together? Till you have shewn what alchymy would have transmuted

muted these base materials into silver and gold of standard currency, I must for one continue to think that to amalgamate them into the common mass, to resolve them into their natural individuality, and then to admit them to a fair and equal share in the benefits of a free constitution was the best that could be done. Perhaps in the event the noble families of France will not be found to have made so bad an exchange. When the storm subsides landed property and hereditary rank will flow back into their channels. Instead of vassalage to the crown unworthy of a man to pay, and vassalage from the people unworthy of a man to receive, these patri-cians will find themselves among the leading representatives of a free people, the legislators of a great nation.

The abolition of hereditary titles of honour, which has been considered as a mere wanton display of democratic envy or ill humour, had its peculiar necessity in the peculiar constitution of the body of nobility in France; differing *in toto* from any thing like what we know of here. That personal distinctions should be hereditary at all is perhaps not very advantageous to public virtue any where; perhaps they ought to be reserved as the personal rewards of public services; but however this may be, when they represent no respectable public character, like the judicial or legislative peerage of these countries; when they serve for nothing but to separate the nation into the two foolish and unnatural classes of *gentil-homme* and *roturier* (a division which our language

language has not even terms to describe), they are then not only barren of any good but very mischievously prolific in evil. The resources of honest industry or ingenious invention were forbidden even to the most beggarly *hobereau*, so that the numerous poor nobility were really little better than *serfs* of the crown shut up and ranged in garrisons and citadels, always ready to be employed against the people; while on the other hand the *roturier* by no merit however great and useful could ever be received into the other class. It is not, I think, possible to conceive a partition more unfavourable to liberty and all virtuous exertion. In vain might you have sought for a citizen in either of these classes; and the operation of this unhappy division accounts for that miserable

spirit

spirit of uniformity and imitation so striking in France to the slightest observer. Much more *indeed* might be said upon this subject which I must content myself thus barely to indicate.

How far the wisdom and virtue of the leaders of the French revolution will be able to proceed towards forming the best possible government time alone can shew. All political power consists of an aggregate sum of the natural rights and liberties of the persons over whom it is exercised. In a just and equitable government no more liberty will be taken from the individual than is necessary to form an aggregate of power sufficient to protect the whole against each and each against the other. The best government therefore is that, under what denomination soever, where the
smallest

smallest quantity of liberty is exchanged for the greatest quantity of protection. These legislators are certainly called to a most arduous task. They have not only the passions and interests of their adverse parties but what is much more dangerous their own to contend with. Power is the strongest of all tests of human virtue, an ordeal almost too severe for the infirmity of our nature. During the formation of a new constitution a dictatorial power must however of necessity be assumed by the lawgivers, and happily we are not without examples of such trusts faithfully exercised for the purposes of their institution, and then restored into the hands of the people. Let us then hope for the best. If avarice and ambition are strong motives the love of glory
in

in generous minds is still stronger ; and surely no set of men in the annals of the world had even a brighter prospect of being consecrated to the eternal admiration and gratitude of posterity than these men have if they should complete what they have so gloriously began.

But alas ! with the gothic feudalism of France learning and the fine arts and honour and humanity have passed away from among men *, and Europe is on the point of being once more overshadowed with the darkness of ignorance and barbarity ! Men will become illiberal by becoming free ! The liberty of the press will put a final stop to the diffusion of knowledge ! Learning will not survive the loss of its syndics and licensers, its

* Page 113, 114.

imprimaturs, privileges, and approbations! Honour must perish by extending its influence over a multitude of persons hitherto excluded from its jurisdiction! Humanity itself will be driven like another Astræa from the earth by substituting the soft gradations of unfelt dependencies to those violent and hostile distinctions which sever the commonwealth in twain; where one half fears and hates, and the other hates and despises! Farewell that tender and ever wakeful providence of government which suffered no rash word or extravagant thought to escape its vigilance! That salutary coercion which silently disposed of a dangerous subject without scandal or alarm! That beautiful inequality of conditions which by dividing men into distinct and impassible

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orders

orders of beings taught them to love as brethren ! That convenient and levelling politeness which makes vice amiable and virtue unnecessary ! Farewell forever those warm and fostering beams of arbitrary power alone favourable to genius and courage, to great conceptions and great achievements ! It was under your benign and genial influence, and not in the chilly atmosphere of a republic, that those miracles of valour and art were performed and produced which have served as models to all succeeding ages, and which still continue to astonish the mind with the vast superiority of their inimitable excellence ! I confess to you, Sir, the little knowledge and experience I have might have led me to conclude directly the contrary of all this. I should have

been

been apt too to think truth and sincerity and honesty and benevolence sufficiently lovely in the simplicity of their nature without that prodigality of ornament and adscitious decoration which you seem to consider as so essential to them. Rich robes and costly jewels, I should have thought, might be employed with advantage to conceal the ugliness of the smoaky image of Loretto, but could add no new grace to the Florentine Venus or the Roman Apollo.

In your view of France you seem to have been so awe-struck with the magnificence of the court and so enamoured of the rising beauties of the Dauphiness that you had no attention left to bestow upon the people. If at your return from Versailles you had looked into the *Morne*,

where the bodies of those unfortunate wretches whose miseries had driven them to seek the last refuge from despair were daily exposed in frightful numbers ; if you had followed the peasant or the artisan to his scanty meal on a morsel of black unfavoury bread, such spectacles would not have been lost upon a heart like yours ; they would surely have abated something of your partial regard for the destructive splendor of a court, or the redundant and invidious wealth of a lazy and luxurious priesthood.

Among the institutions to be fundamentally reformed or utterly done away before any system of liberty could be established in France the papal hierarchy stood prominent ; and this is the institution whose defalcation and reform you seem
most

most feelingly to deplore ! To be called upon in this country and at this day to defend the protestant reformation, the leading motives of the revolution in 1688, the association of ideas sucked in with our milk that popery and slavery are as it were convertible and synonymous terms, seems so strange and extraordinary that all consideration of the subject is at first lost in surprize. I believe however your paradoxes may be safely entrusted to the ordinary sense of mankind notwithstanding the authority of your name and the splendid oratory with which they are introduced. It will not, I think, be necessary on this occasion to disturb the repose of those controversies by which the contrary principles were long ago established. When evident and practical truths have
been

been received into the mind so as to form a kind of instinctive sense, the diagrams by which they were at first demonstrated, like the scaffolding of a completed building, may be safely laid aside. Shall I now go about to prove by logical induction that liberty of conscience not being in the *power* cannot be in the *right* of man to take away? or that belief not being subject to human volition cannot be subject to human controul? No, Sir, I will content myself with simply recapitulating some of those propositions to which the minds of men in these countries have been so long used to give spontaneous assent, and then leave your paradoxes to fight their way through them as well as they can.

No

No man or body of men under any pretence whatsoever can assume the power of governing or forcing the belief the thoughts the reason of others without the most impious and foolish arrogance of the power of God. Religion as a rule of faith by which we are to be saved or condemned in another life must be the exclusive private concern of the individual, in which every man has an indisputable right to follow the light of his own reason and to reject all authority founded on the reason of others. Law is a rule of action only and cannot be extended to the sentiments and feelings of men. Those who denounce to us eternal damnation as the consequence of error in faith, and then would force us to hazard our immortal souls upon their judgments who have no
 concern

concern in the matter, contrary to our own reason who have so deep an interest in it, are the most execrable of all tyrants. All temporal power in the church is of mere human invention and amenable to human controul. Christ has expressly declared that his kingdom is not of this world. If the apostles were obeyed, it was from reverence of their virtues and not from any obligation; they received the voluntary gifts of the brethren, but they laid no claim to a tenth share in every man's possessions or the produce of his industry. Excommunication was no more at first, as the word imports, than expulsion from a club or society; and bishops only men of the wiser and discreeter sort, chosen by the brotherhood to preside over their ceremonies and to instruct the ignorant, to whom

whom all submission was entirely voluntary. In process of time this society became sufficiently strong to set all civil governments at defiance; and then that fatal confederation between civil and ecclesiastical power took place, under which mankind has groaned for more than a thousand years. By this contract for the bodies and souls of men, the mind is first to be enslaved and then the body delivered over to the secular arm with its active principle, the spring of all its virtues and faculties, bound up in chains. From this complicated tyranny even death itself is no refuge. Its power extends into the kingdom of darkness; the miserable mortal who has not obeyed its ordinances here, who does not go to the grave clothed in the *san benito* of their inquisition and carry

in his hand the passport of absolution is handed over to the agents of the hierarchy in another world; to the discipline of eternal torment.

A hierarchy considered as a religious institution is contrary to the plain precepts of Christ and to the whole tenor of the christian religion. As a civil institution, where it has been most modified and reformed, it is at best an unnecessary burthen upon the industry of the people and a dead weight in the preponderating scale of power. In this country it is perhaps one of those evils sanctified by time which it may be more safe to endure than to remove, but still calling loudly for reform. The ecclesiastical courts are a crying oppression. The miserable and inadequate provision made for the major part of the
parochial

parochial clergy is also a serious grievance. In the place where I live the respectable clergyman with a numerous family does the duty of a most extensive parish for sixty pounds a year, while from the same parish the Dean of Lincoln receives a thousand per annum for doing nothing at all *. The constitution of the papal

* One of the greatest and wisest men this country ever produced strongly recommended it to reform these and other abuses 150 years ago. To those who assert it to be “ against good policy to innovate any thing in church” matters he says; “ This objection is excellently answered “ by the prophet; stand upon the *old ways*; and consider “ *which is the right or true way and walk therein.*” He “ does not say *stand upon the old ways and walk therein*: “ for with all wise and moderate persons, custom and “ usage are indeed of reverence sufficient to cause a “ stand, and to make them look about them, but no “ warrant to guide and conduct them; so as to be a just “ ground of deliberation but not of direction: and who “ knows not that time is truly compared to a stream “ which carries down fresh and pure water into that dead “ sea of corruption surrounding all human actions?

hierarchy in France bore a strong analogy to that of her civil state; it exhibited the two extremes without the intermediate parts. The prelates were rich luxurious lords and the country parsons rude and needy peasants. And can you, Sir, seriously maintain that religion is likely to suffer by transferring its ministry from such hands into those of a sober well regulated parochial clergy? The religion of Christ is peculiarly the religion of the

“ Therefore if men shall not by their industry, virtue
 “ and policy, as it were, with the oar row against the
 “ stream and bent of time, all institutions and ordi-
 “ nances, be they never so pure, will corrupt and dege-
 “ nerate. And I would ask why the *civil state* should
 “ be purged and restored by good and wholesome laws
 “ made every session of parliament, devising remedies as
 “ fast as time breeds mischief, and yet the *ecclesiastical*
 “ *state* continue upon the dregs of time and receive no
 “ alteration at all?” Lord Bacon’s Philos. Works, 4to.
 p. 308.

poor

poor and distressed; his mission more especially regards the meek and lowly. The mild spirit of charity and love, the sublime and simple morality, the endearing and consolatory doctrines of the Gospel will not lose their hold upon the hearts of men, because instead of popes and cardinals and archbishops and deans and canons they are delivered to them by plain pastors, their own chosen and immediate guides. The power and authority of these teachers will be preserved by the same means by which the voluntary submission of free consciences was at first obtained by the apostles, “ * by wisdom, humility, clearness of doctrine and sincerity of conversation, and not by suppression of the natural sciences and of the mo-

* Hobbes,

“ rality

“ rality of natural reason, nor by obscure
 “ language, nor by arrogating to them-
 “ selves more knowledge than they can
 “ make appear, nor by pious frauds ; nor
 “ by such other faults as in the pastors
 “ of God’s church are not only faults but
 “ also scandals, apt to make men stumble
 “ one time or other upon the suppression
 “ of their authority.”

I will pass over your apotheosis of
 monkery, and the necessity for retaining
 the bishops to take care of the consciences
 of the lords, for fear of being tempted
 to more levity than is consistent with re-
 spect ; however I will just observe that it
 does not appear that there are any par-
 ticular signs of reprobation among the
 nobility of Scotland who are deprived of
 these sublime guides.

Men

Men have in different periods resisted spiritual as well as civil tyranny in various degrees and with various success. The good sense and high spirit of this country cast off the bonds of Rome at the first dawn of reason ;

——then might you see

Cowls, hoods, and habits with their wearers tost

And fluttered into rags ; then reliques, beads,

Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls

The sport of winds.——

The political part of the church government has, I suppose, been wholly dissolved by the late reformation in France, and this was certainly the most pressing object of a political revolution. The present mixture of religion with politics, our religious tests and parliamentary religion would I suspect appear somewhat ludicrous

crous to a person who could come to the consideration unbiaſſed by habit and cuſtom. Is it not a curious idea that if a Solon or a Socrates were to riſe up amongſt us one could not fit for Old Sarum, or the other execute the office of juſtice of peace; Epaminondas could not command a troop of horſe or Themiſtocles be made a poſt captain, till they had made themſelves maſter of the thirty-nine Articles previous to taking the religious oaths or the ſacramental teſt? till they thoroughly underſtood what Lord Bacon calls the charaſteriftics of a believing chriſtian*.

* 2. He believes three to be one and one to be three; a father not to be older than his ſon; a ſon to be equal with his father; and one proceeding from both to be equal to both; as believing three perſons in one nature; and two natures in one perſon.

3. He believes a virgin to be the mother of a ſon; and that very ſon of hers to be her maker. He believes
him

How much of the trumpery of the church of Rome has been suffered to remain I do not know, nor is it I think of much consequence. As soon as men are allowed the free exercise of their reason, these wretched inventions of ignorance and folly will be presently neglected and forgotten. With the temporal power the spiritual jurisdiction, the vain and senseless theology of Rome will also pass away. The miserable distinctions and subtleties of the schools, their abstract essences and substantial forms, their explanation of the incomprehensible mysteries of religion by the incomprehensible meta-

him to have been shut up in a narrow cell, whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time, who was, and is from everlasting. He believes him to have been a weak child, and carried in arms, who is almighty; and him once to have died who alone has life and immortality. *Bac. Works, 4to. vol. iii.*

p. 129.

H

physics

physics of the peripatetics, will cease to resound from the benches of the Sorbonne and rest for ever confined to the learned dust of its libraries.

One of the most common objects of oratory is to persuade men to believe something more than we are willing to assert in plain terms or can prove by plain argument. I do not know that you anywhere say in so many words that all revolutions and reformatations past present and to come are unlawful usurpations, but I am sure you labour hard to leave this impression upon the mind of your readers. And what is somewhat curious in a whig by profession, you go over the same ground which the historians mention to have been taken by the tories in the Convention Parliament. In the looser analogies
of

of declamation it is not difficult to confound revolution with rebellion, reformation with irreligion, resistance with revolt, and a jealous love of the constitution with faction ; they have all some features in common, and by presenting the resemblance and artfully concealing the difference might in the jumble be mistaken for each other. But we will not be so deceived, we will distinguish between them, nay more we will utterly detest and abominate the one and approve and when necessary vindicate the other, with our lives and fortunes. In support of our common sense and feelings we have the highest authority. The nation has spoken. The decree is eternally recorded. “ EN-
 “ DEAVOURING TO SUBVERT THE CON-
 “ STITUTION, BY BREAKING THE ORI-

“ GINAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
 “ KING AND PEOPLE, AND VIOLATING
 “ THE FUNDAMENTAL LAWS,” justify,
 nay sanctify resistance and revolution.
 This you are reluctantly and give me leave
 to say somewhat awkwardly obliged to
 admit, and the warmest advocate for the
 liberty of the subject, the most ardent lover
 of the constitution, can claim, can desire
 no more. You say, Sir, that you desire to
 be thought no better a whig than Lord
 Somers. Are you sure that you deserve to
 be thought as good a one? Let us com-
 pare your whiggism with his. You tell
 us *, that “ it is so far from being true
 “ that we acquired a right by the Revo-
 “ lution to elect our kings” (King Wil-
 liam the Third however was certainly

* Page 27.

elected)

electd) “ that if we had possessed it before, the English nation did at that time” (they chose it must be confessed a very extraordinary moment) “ most solemnly renounce and abdicate it for themselves and their posterities for ever.”

So then it seems the people *abdicated* as well as the king! but before they could *abdicate* the right they must have been in possession of it. Now setting aside the consideration whether these men could agree eventually to bind their posterity in chains which they themselves were unable to bear, it must be allowed that to abdicate and renounce for their descendants forever a right which they were at that very moment asserting and actually exercising for themselves, presents a complication of injustice and absurdity that we

ought

ought not to impute to our ancestors but upon the most clear and substantial evidence that such was their intention. But you neither do nor can produce any such evidence at all. You rest your whole proof upon your construction of a resolution of the Convention Parliament which I will be bold to say cannot possibly be wrested to any such construction in the judgment of any unprejudiced person who takes in the whole of the circumstances.

“ The Lords Spiritual and Temporal and
 “ Commons do, in the name of all the
 “ people aforesaid, most humbly and faith-
 “ fully submit themselves their heirs and
 “ posterities forever” (a common form of creating a fee simple, which may nevertheless be afterwards forfeited in various ways) “ and do faithfully promise that
 “ they

“ they will stand to, maintain, and defend
 “ their said Majesties ; and also the limit-
 “ ation of the crown therein specified
 “ and maintained to the *utmost of their*
 “ *power*” (remark by the way that these
 last are words of *limitation*, and not of *pur-*
chase). Against whom to defend them
 in the name of common sense? against the
 abdicated king, his son, their descend-
 ants and adherents, and not against any
 future necessity arising from similar cir-
 cumstances to those which were the very
 origin plea and foundation of this vote,
 the corner-stone of their whole proceeding!
 And when they did interrupt the actual
 succession to establish a new one, so far
 from binding themselves as you seem to
 insinuate to more general and unlimited
 obedience, they actually contracted with
 the

the crown for the positive renunciation of all its unconstitutional claims; and they fixed land-marks not only as due boundaries and limits to the crown, but as notices to the nation what the *constitution* is which they are not to suffer *to be subverted*, what are the terms of *the original contract* which they are not to suffer *to be broken*, and what their *fundamental laws* are which they are not to suffer *to be violated*. The declaration of right is interwoven with and actually forms part of the act which settles the succession of the crown. By the act of settlement, upon which the rights of the present Royal Family to the throne of these realms are founded, not only a “temporary,” but a perpetual “solution of continuity” took place. The hereditary succession was intirely interrupted
in

in a whole male line, and William was *elected* King. Now Sir you must either maintain that in interrupting the succession and electing the Prince of Nassau the nation *usurped* as well as *abdicated*, and so vitiate the title of the present Royal Family, or you must admit that the nation possessed the right which they then exercised; and if you admit this, I defy you to shew by any reasonable argument that we have not at this time exactly the same rights which our forefathers had to do as they did in similar circumstances. If your mode of reasoning had been of any avail, there were not wanting men at that time to give it its due weight. Turner the deprived Bishop of Ely among many others has taken from your positions all the graces of novelty, he has beat all the

ground before you. He told the Convention Parliament that, “ that being one
 “ (fundamental) law which settles the suc-
 “ cession, it is as much a part of the ori-
 “ ginal compact as any; then if such a
 “ case happens, as an abdication in a suc-
 “ cessive kingdom, without doubt the
 “ compact being made to the King, his
 “ heirs and successors, the disposition of
 “ the Crown cannot fall to us till all the
 “ heirs do abdicate too. There are indeed
 “ many examples and too many interrup-
 “ tions in the lineal successions of the
 “ Crown of England: I think I can in-
 “ stance in all seven since the Conquest,
 “ wherein the right heir hath been put
 “ by: but that doth not follow that every
 “ breach of the first original contract gives
 “ us power to dispose of the lineal suc-
 “ cession;

“ cession ; especially, I think, since the
 “ statutes of Queen Elizabeth and King
 “ James the First, that have established
 “ the oath of allegiance to the King, his
 “ heirs and successors, the law is stronger
 “ against such disposition : I grant that
 “ from King William the First to Henry
 “ the Eighth there have been seven inter-
 “ ruptions of the legal line of hereditary
 “ succession ; but I say, these statutes are
 “ made since that time, and the making
 “ of new laws, being as much a part of
 “ the original compact, as the observing
 “ of old ones, or any thing else, we are
 “ obliged to pursue those laws, till altered
 “ by the legislative power, which single
 “ or jointly, without the Royal assent, I
 “ suppose we do not pretend to” — “ I hope
 “ and am persuaded, that both Lords and

“ Commons do agree in this, not to *break*
 “ *the line of succession* so as to make the
 “ crown *elective*.”

Now hear Lord Somers—“ The word
 “ abdicate, doth naturally and properly
 “ signify entirely to renounce, throw off,
 “ disown, relinquish any thing or person
 “ so as to have no further to do with it ;
 “ and that whether it be done by express
 “ words, or by doing such *acts as are in-*
 “ *consistent with the holding or retaining*
 “ *of the thing.*” “ That King James the
 “ Second hath renounced to be a King
 “ according to the constitution, by avowing
 “ to govern by a despotic power unknown
 “ to the constitution, and consistent with
 “ it he hath renounced to be King *ac-*
 “ *ording to the law.* Such a King as he
 “ swore to be at the coronation, such a
 “ King

“ King to whom the allegiance of an
 “ English subject is due, and hath set
 “ up another kind of dominion, which is
 “ to all intents and purposes an abdica-
 “ tion or abandoning of his legal title,
 “ as fully as if it had been done by exprefs
 “ words.”

Hear too Lord Chief Justice Holt—
 My Lords, “ Both in the common law of
 “ England, and in the civil law, and
 “ in common understanding, there are
 “ exprefs acts of renunciation that are
 “ not by deed; for if your Lordships
 “ will please to observe the *government*
 “ *and magistracy is under a trust*, and any
 “ *acting contrary to that trust is renoun-*
 “ *cing of the trust* though it be not a re-
 “ nouncing by formal deed; for it is a
 “ plain declaration by act and deed,
 “ though

“ though not in writing, that he *who hath*
 “ *the trust*, acting contrary, is a declaimer
 “ of the trust; especially, my Lords, if
 “ the actings be such as are *inconsistent*
 “ *with, and subversive of the trusts*; for
 “ how can a man in reason or sense, ex-
 “ press a greater renunciation of a trust,
 “ than by the constant declarations of
 “ his actions to be quite contrary to that
 “ trust?”

Now Sir whether your whiggism most
 resembles that of Lord Chancellor Somers
 and Chief Justice Holt or that of the non-
 juring ex-bishop I will leave to your own
 candour to decide.

You give your French correspondent to
 understand that a vast majority of “ not
 “ the least learned and reflecting men of
 “ this kingdom” totally disapprove and
 abhor

abhor the whole foundation and proceedings of the Revolution in France. In the retirement in which I live, I have the good fortune sometimes to converse with persons deserving at least of this description (for they are not all confined to courts and capitals) and the result of my observation has been very different indeed from that of yours. These persons have appeared to me to consider the grounds and motives of this Revolution as perfectly legitimate. To have tried it upon the principles of our own revered Revolution, and to have found in their verdict that the constitution of France *had been long subverted, the original contract between King and People long broken and the fundamental laws long violated.* Far from considering the nascent liberties of France

with

with envy or aversion they have seemed to look forward with a warm and lively hope to the final establishment of civil and religious freedom in that great nation ; perhaps to have extended their views into the beautiful perspective of general liberty and general toleration. Upon the wisdom or expediency of the acts of the National Assembly they have not indeed appeared so ready to decide, they have thought it more decent and respectful to suspend their judgment till the final hearing of the cause, to leave to the persons immediately concerned the management of their own affairs, and the consideration of their own interests, and not to give extrajudicial opinions *pendente lite* in a suit in which they are neither plaintiff nor defendant, nor advocate, nor judge.

If

If you Sir have thought this prudent caution unnecessary, I am persuaded you have been provoked to think so by certain indiscreet applications made or supposed to be made of what is now doing in France to what might or ought to be done here. The extreme ardour of your zeal cannot easily be otherways understood.

You give as Rousseau's a secret for exciting the callous attention of the public which might otherwise perhaps have been suspected to be a receipt of your own *. It has been said of him that his deductions are logical and exact from premises which are sometimes false. In this indeed you differ, for your first positions may for the most part be safely admitted and your conclusions should I think be very frequently

* Page 251.

rejected. And yet I believe the errors as well as the beauties of the writings of both derive much from the same source, a too exquisite even to a morbid feeling of your subject. Rousseau was a man of great sincerity and far above any such little art as you say Hume attributed to him ; so, Sir, are you ; but you have ungoverned imaginations. The modesty of reason is dazzled and confounded amid the brilliant blaze of your imagery and invention. You are driven out of your course by crowding too much sail in proportion to your ballast. In such language as yours a man may (to borrow a French term) *dereason* with a great deal of eclat and success ; plain matter-of-fact writers might often answer you sufficiently by translating your eloquent periods, where

“ imagi-

“imagination bodies forth the forms of
“things unknown”—into common lan-
guage, the vulgar idiom.

Because the tenets attributed to certain societies seem to stimulate to premature or unnecessary resistance you attack all reform. You see a machine leaning to one side and you redress it with so much redundant strength towards the other, that instead of restoring it to its true perpendicular medium, you force it into a more violent and I think a much more dangerous inclination; for if we were to admit one of the extremes, either that the nation may at any moment cashier one king and elect another; or that in no case whatsoever the nation can interrupt or change the hereditary succession of the crown, I must consider the first alterna-

tive as the soundest in principle and the safest in practice ; for after all modify it how you will, in spite of all the address with which you endeavour to keep the “ small and temporary solution of continuity from the eye*,” your diminutive epithets qualifying phrases and “ pious legislative ejaculations,” in spite of the pains you take to “ countenance and foster and make the most of the idea of an hereditary succession,” in spite of your attempt to confound *expediency* with *necessity*†, it will at last remain an undeniable fact that James was “ cashiered” and that William was “ elected.”

“ How,” you ask‡ “ does the settlement of the crown in the Brunswick line come to legalize our monarchy

* Page 24,

† P. 23,

‡ P. 19.

“ rather

“ rather than that of any of the neighbouring countries ?” For this plain reason, because the House of Brunswick was called to the throne by the national choice in preference to the Houses of Stuart and Savoy and Bourbon, as more likely to preserve and maintain our civil and religious rights ; and because the House of Brunswick accepted of the crown under contracts and stipulations known, ratified and recorded ; nothing like which has ever happened that I know of in any neighbouring monarchy.

You tell us too that the statute *De tallagio non concedendo**, the *Petition of right*—the act of *Habeas Corpus* depend upon the validity of the title of the king by whom they were assented to ; but this

* Page 32.

I utterly

I utterly deny. The privileges ratified by these acts were not in the gift of any king; they were “the true ancient and “indubitable rights of the people of this “kingdom*.”

If, Sir, you had confined yourself to exposing the hollow and shapeless phantoms existing, if they exist at all in the brains of a few senseless enthusiasts,

—The brood of folly without father bred—
and to the examination of the wisdom and equity of the proceedings of the National Assembly, you would never have been troubled with any observations of mine. But you have gone much and I think most unnecessarily farther: you have attacked the fundamental principles of all reform: you have brought the subject

* Bill of Rights.

which

which appeared at such a distance home to our own bosoms—*tua res agitur*—you have revived old disputes and subsided heats, evoked the sleeping shades of jacobites and republicans, and called up into untimely resurrection the long forgotten animosities of roundhead and cavalier. You have made it necessary for us *now* to examine when and how, under what pressure of evil and under what sanction of right, a revolution may ever again at any future period be recurred to in this country.

It is of the essence of power to encrease by its own force; wherever the greatest quantum is found, to that all inferior quantities will gravitate as to a common centre. For this reason Mr. Locke when he gave a form of government to one of the Colonies

lonies in America limited its duration to an hundred years. To fabricate eternal machinery either physical or moral belongs only to the hand of God. Nay so far has God himself condescended to the verfatility of his creatures that he has already given us two dispensations differing considerably from each other. The very regulation of time by which every thing else is regulated has been found fubject to errour and requiring change. To the Julian has fucceeded the Gregorian fyf-tem, and to that another muft fucceed if the world fhould fo long endure. Our poor little institutions like our watches require to be periodically wound up and frequently repaired. They all contain in their very effence and original concoction latent principles of deftruction. It is the
best

best office of the collective wisdom of the times to mark the decay and to retard its progress, and when the day comes, as come it must sooner or later, that the machine ceases entirely to answer the purposes for which it was constructed, to direct the formation of a new one if possible on a better principle and of more durable materials.

In this country those who consider the immense and growing influence of the crown in addition to powers which had been already deemed sufficient for its support, will not I think be at a loss to prognosticate the malady which will one day give the mortal blow to our boasted constitution. Corrupt influence is its radical disease, it will encrease with our riches and peace and prosperity ;

The young disease that must subdue at length
Grows with our growth and strengthens with our
strength.

This polypus in the heart of the constitution will carry it off by a sudden blow full of life and vigour, and without much warning. The conquest of America by the King's troops, would most probably have greatly accelerated this event; as the increase of Indian gold and Indian influence now bid fair to hasten its approach.

By way of deterring us in this country from meddling in the mysteries of state, and to "operate with a wholesome awe upon free citizens," you tell your correspondent that our commonwealth is "*consecrated**," that its "very defects and

* Page 143.

" corrup-

“ corruptions are to be approached
 “ with pious awe and trembling solici-
 “ tude.” You denounce the fate of
 Uzzah, whom God smote for his error,
 because he put forth his hand and took
 hold of the ark of God when the *oxen*
shook it, on all those who shall dare to ex-
 amine with sacrilegious curiosity this my-
 stical hypostatic union of Church and State.

With a little less of the terrible and
 somewhat more of *enjouement*, you in ano-
 ther place advise us to leave altercation
 and take to enjoyment.

Ut melius, quidquid erit, pati!

And then again you quit this epicurean
 indifference for quite another strain*, and
 allow that a “jealous ever-waking vi-

* Page 79.

“ gillance to guard the treasure of our
 “ liberty, not only from invasion but
 “ from decay and corruption is our best
 “ wisdom and our first duty.”

What an admirable writer has said in answer to the preachers up of all this effeminate timidity in probing the wounds of the state; what he urges with irresistible force on those who would persuade us that at the time we guarded ourselves from one mode of oppression we covenanted to submit to every other, is so strong in point, replete with so much intelligence and intimate knowledge of the subject, so apposite to the present times, and so deserving of constant attention, that I will indulge myself in the liberty of making a very long quotation. To what in substance I might have said myself, I will superadd the

the authority of a great name, and the energy of most eloquent language*. “ It is not to be argued†,” says this great orator, “ that we endure no grievances because our grievances are not of the same sort with those under which we laboured formerly; not precisely those which we bore under the Tudors, or vindicated on the Stuarts. ‡ No complaisance to our court, or to our age, can make me believe nature to be so changed, but that public liberty will be among us, as among our ancestors, obnoxious to some person or other; and that opportunities will be furnished for attempting at least some alteration to the prejudice of our constitution. These attempts

* Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents.

† Page 8.

‡ Page 10.

“ will

“ will naturally vary in their mode, ac-
 “ cording to times and circumstances; for
 “ ambition, though it has ever the same
 “ general views, has not at all times the
 “ same means, nor the same particular
 “ objects. A great deal of the furniture
 “ of antient tyranny is worn to rags, and
 “ the rest is entirely out of fashion. Be-
 “ sides there are few statesmen so very
 “ clumsy and awkward in their business,
 “ as to fall into the identical snare which
 “ has proved fatal to their predecessors.
 “ When an arbitrary imposition is at-
 “ tempted upon the subject, undoubtedly
 “ it will not bear on its forehead the name
 “ of *ship-money*. There is no danger that
 “ an extension of the *forest-laws* should be
 “ the chosen mode of oppression in this
 “ age; and when we hear any instance of
 “ mi-

“ ministerial rapacity to the prejudice of
“ the rights of private life, it will cer-
“ tainly not be the exaction of two hun-
“ dred pullets from a woman of fashion for
“ leave to lie with her own husband.
“ Every age has its own manners and its
“ politics dependent upon them, and the
“ same attempts will not be made against
“ a constitution fully formed and matured
“ that were used to destroy it in the cra-
“ dle, or to resist its growth during its
“ infancy.

“ Against the being of parliament I am
“ satisfied no designs have ever been enter-
“ tained since the Revolution. Every one
“ must perceive that it is strongly the in-
“ terest of the court to have some second
“ cause interposed between the minister
“ and the people. The gentlemen of the
“ House

“ House of Commons have an interest
 “ equally strong in sustaining the part of
 “ that intermediate cause. However they
 “ may hire out the *usufruct* of their
 “ voices, they never will part with the
 “ *fee and inheritance*. Accordingly those
 “ who have been of the most known de-
 “ votion to the will and pleasure of a
 “ court have at the same time been
 “ most forward in asserting an high autho-
 “ rity in the House of Commons. When
 “ they knew who were to use that au-
 “ thority and how it was to be employ-
 “ ed, they thought it could never be car-
 “ ried too far. It must be always the
 “ wish of an unconstitutional statesman,
 “ that an House of Commons who are
 “ entirely dependent upon him, should
 “ have every right of the people entirely
 “ de-

“ dependant upon their pleasure. It was
 “ soon discovered that the forms of a
 “ free and the ends of an arbitrary govern-
 “ ment, were things not altogether in-
 “ compatible.

“ The power of the crown, almost
 “ dead and rotten as prerogative has grown
 “ up anew with more strength and far less
 “ odium, under the name of influence;
 “ an influence which operated without
 “ noise and without violence; an influence
 “ which converted the very antagonist
 “ into the instrument of power; which
 “ contained in itself a perpetual principle
 “ of growth and renovation; and which
 “ the distresses and the prosperity of the
 “ country equally tended to augment, was
 “ an admirable substitute for a preroga-
 “ tive, that being only the offspring of

“ antiquated prejudices, had moulded in
 “ its original stamina, irresistible prin-
 “ ciples of decay and dissolution. The
 “ ignorance of the people is a bottom but
 “ for a temporary system; the interest of
 “ active men in the state is a foundation
 “ perpetual and infallible.

“ * They who will not conform their
 “ conduct to the public good and cannot
 “ support it by the prerogative of the
 “ crown have adopted a new plan. They
 “ have totally abandoned the shattered and
 “ old-fashioned fortrefs of prerogative, and
 “ made a lodgment in the strong hold of
 “ Parliament itself.

“ If they have any evil design to which
 “ there is no ordinary legal power com-
 “ mensurate, they bring it into Parlia-

* Page 70.

“ ment.

“ ment. In Parliament the whole is ex-
 “ ecuted from the beginning to the end ;
 “ in Parliament the power of obtaining
 “ their object is absolute and the safety
 “ in the proceeding perfect. No rules
 “ to confine, no after-reckonings to ter-
 “ rify. Parliament cannot with any great
 “ propriety punish others for things in
 “ which they themselves have been ac-
 “ complices. Thus the controul of Par-
 “ liament upon the executory power is
 “ lost, because Parliament is made to par-
 “ take in every considerable act of go-
 “ vernment.

“ * I must beg leave†, ‘however,’ to
 “ observe, that no part of the legislative
 “ rights can be exercised without regard
 “ to the general opinion of those who are

* Letter to John Farr and John Harris. † Page 50.

“ to be governed. That general opinion
 “ is the vehicle and organ of legislative
 “ omnipotence; without this it may be
 “ a theory to entertain the mind, but it is
 “ nothing in the direction of affairs. The
 “ completeness of the legislative authority
 “ of Parliament over this kingdom is not
 “ questioned; and yet many things indu-
 “ bitably included in the abstract idea of
 “ that power, and which carry no abso-
 “ lute injustice in themselves, yet being
 “ contrary to the opinion and feelings of
 “ the people, can as little be exercised as
 “ if the Parliament in that case had been
 “ possessed of no right at all. I see no
 “ abstract reason which can be given why
 “ the same power which made and re-
 “ pealed the High Commission-Court and
 “ the Star Chamber might not revive
 “ them

“ them again ; and these courts, warned
 “ by their former fate, might possibly
 “ execute their power with some sort of
 “ justice. But the madness would be as
 “ unquestionable as the competence of that
 “ Parliament which should attempt such
 “ things *. In effect to follow not to
 “ force the public inclination, to give a
 “ direction, a form, a technical dress, and
 “ a specific sanction to the general sense
 “ of the community, is the true end of
 “ legislature. It is so with regard to the
 “ exercise of all the powers which our
 “ constitution knows in any of its parts,
 “ and indeed to the substantial existence
 “ of any of the parts themselves.

“ † If there be one fact in the world
 “ perfectly clear it is this ; that the dis-

* Page 52.

† P. 55.

“ position

“ position of the people of *these countries* *
 “ is wholly averse to any other than a free
 “ government. If any asks me what a
 “ free government is, I answer, that for
 “ any practical purpose it is what the
 “ people think so ; and that they, and not
 “ I, are the natural, lawful, and compe-
 “ tent judges of this matter.

“ Liberty” “ must indeed” † be limited
 “ in order to be possessed ‡ ; but liberty
 “ is a good to be improved, not an evil
 “ to be lessened. It is not only a private
 “ blessing of the first order, but the vital
 “ spring and energy of the state itself,
 “ which has just so much life and vigour
 “ as there is liberty in it. But whether
 “ liberty be advantageous or not (for I
 “ know it is a fashion to decry the very

* America in the original.

† Page 57.

‡ P. 58.

“ principle) none will dispute that peace
 “ is a blessing ; and peace must in the
 “ course of human affairs be frequently
 “ bought by some indulgence and tole-
 “ ration at least to liberty. For as the
 “ Sabbath (though of Divine institution)
 “ was made for man, not man for the
 “ Sabbath, government, which can claim
 “ no higher origin or authority, in its ex-
 “ ercise at least, ought to conform to the
 “ exigencies of the time and the temper
 “ and character of the people with whom
 “ it is concerned ; and not always to at-
 “ tempt violently to bend the people to
 “ their theories of subjection. The bulk
 “ of mankind on their part are not ex-
 “ cessively curious concerning any the-
 “ ories whilst they are really happy ; and
 “ one sure symptom of an ill-conducted
 “ state

“ state is the propensity of the people to
 “ resort to them.

“ But when subjects by a long course
 “ of ill conduct* are once thoroughly in-
 “ flamed and the state itself violently dis-
 “ tempered, the people must have some
 “ satisfaction to their feelings more solid
 “ than a sophistical speculation on law and
 “ government †.—*General* rebellions and
 “ revolts of a whole people never were
 “ encouraged, they are always provoked.—
 “ Can it be true loyalty to any govern-
 “ ment ‡ or true patriotism towards any
 “ country to flatter their pride and pas-
 “ sions rather than to enlighten their
 “ reason ?”

This same great author (for I love to
 avail myself of his name and abilities) for-

* Page 59. † P. 4. ‡ P. 42.

merly exposed by arguments to which time and experience have since set their seal, the danger of the policy adopted in the beginning of the present reign, of breaking up the great parties into which the nation had been divided from the time of the Revolution*. These parties certainly formed a barrier between the people and the crown. They embodied as it were administration. They entered into a recognizance with the public for ministers and gave a broader surface to responsibility. They served too as a mutual counterpoise and check upon one another; and each in turn became bound by interest, the strongest tie, to make common cause with the people. Each had a reputation to preserve and each acted under the pene-

* Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents.

trating and suspicious eye of a rival. By their constant struggles for popularity, then necessary to any permanency in power, the flame of liberty was ventilated and kept alive. Public opinion while it sat as umpire between the pretensions of these great contending parties preserved its due weight and consequence in all public affairs.

A great part of this has been since done away and we may deprecate the hour when the work shall be completed. If we should ever see a minister standing firmly on the ruins of all parties, unconnected and alone, filling the House of Lords with unknown and unconnected men, and every office of the state with young recruits to be drilled in his own discipline against future contingencies, keeping all
the

the wisdom and virtue and ability and consequence of the nation at a distance, that he himself may be the only figure among cyphers, captivating the vulgar by small temporary arts, and lavishing with unbounded prodigality the immense patronage of the crown to procure an unheard-of allegiance to his person and a blind and abject submission to his will in the two Houses of Parliament; such a minister would presently be found to have no other boundary to his power than the extent of his ambition. He might pull off the mask when he pleased. The confidence and good opinion of the nation might or might not be the object of his taste, but it must very soon cease to be necessary for his protection. Under such a minister we might perhaps maintain our consequence

among foreign nations, and our wealth and commerce might flourish and encrease: all this happened to France under Richlieu: but our liberties and laws would stand upon a most hollow and unsafe foundation. The *government* might be strong and powerful, but the *constitution* would soon find itself attacked with a most dangerous, perhaps fatal paralysis.

Let us for the sake of argument suppose ourselves, what I should conceive the ken of your mental eye would find no very difficult vision, carried forward into a period of time, I hope a distant one, when the stagnant and stinking waters of corruption shall have pervaded every avenue of the State; when there shall be a House of Commons chiefly consisting of placemen, pensioners, hungry expectants,

ants, India delinquents, and every other description of ministerial dependants, kennelled like hounds and crouching for employment; representatives representing nothing but their own personal interests; a House of Lords of new creatures of the minister and old valets of the king, courtly lawyers and a courtly hierarchy—*Nihil usquam prisca aut integri moris; omnes, exutâ æqualitate, jussa principis aspectantes*; the nation itself infected with a narrow selfish egotism, where every man feels himself the central point of his own little circle of luxuries and conveniences, and holds a stupid indifference to the public concern. I have stated, I think, nothing impossible to conceive, or unlikely to happen from our actual tendencies; under such a supposition, even you, Sir, will I believe allow,

allow, that though the forms of the constitution might be preserved and the laws yet remain inviolate, all the liberty the people were still permitted to enjoy might be fairly considered as held at the will of the crown; it would stand upon no deeper a foundation than the personal virtue of the Brunswick of that day; as the French are said to have owed the mildness of their despotism to the SWEET BLOOD of the Bourbons.

In such a situation of affairs, if I thought with Tully, which I certainly do not, the *posse si velit** a sufficient cause for recurring to resistance and revolution in point of right, I should consider such a conjuncture in point of expediency

* Quæ causa justior est bella gerandi, quam servitutis depulsio? in qua etiam si non sit molestus dominus, tamen est miserrimum posse si velit.

as of all others the most unpropitious to any strong effort in favour of liberty. The people as I have observed before must feel the actual pressure of the evil and feel it pretty strongly too before they can be made to move. They will not hazard present good for contingent advantage; and in this I think their gross good sense directs them perfectly well; for premature resistance instead of serving the cause of liberty, has generally ended in most effectually playing the game into the hands of power; it furnishes the very desired pretext, and turns glorious and honourable contention into treason and rebellion. In such order of things, action being neither necessary nor expedient, I would endeavour to provide for the future by turning the thoughts and attention

tion of men to the past; the GLORIOUS REVOLUTION should be perpetually recalled to their remembrance, and the immortal decree of the Convention Parliament continually impressed upon their minds as the great fundamental law of the constitution. If this is the object of the Revolution Society, and I am sure I do not know that it is not, I should be proud to see my humble name upon its rolls. To the Revolution this nation owes a hundred years of liberty and prosperity, and if we do not “ forget the Lord which
 “ brought us forth out of the land of
 “ Ægypt from the house of bondage” it may prolong the blessing to an hundred more. Let us then “ teach it diligently
 “ to our children, let us talk of it when
 “ we sit in our houses, and when we
 “ walk

“ walk by the way ; when we lie down
 “ and when we rise up ; let us bind it
 “ for a sign upon our hands and as a
 “ frontlet between our eyes ; let us write
 “ it upon the posts of our house and on
 “ our gates.” To kings and ministers
 too it furnishes a most admirable pre-
 ventative lesson. Instead of endeavour-
 ing to prolong their Asiatic dream with
 soft lullabies to the tune of divine right
 and passive obedience, I would find
 them where they lay asleep and hollow
 in their ear REVOLUTION. Revolution
 should resound through the palaces of
 kings and the levee-rooms of ministers.
 Far from endeavouring to hide—

“ This word of fear,
 “ Unpleasing to a royal ear,”

in the tawdry rags of sophistry, I would

O

present

present it to them in large and legible characters, that he that runneth might read. I would write it upon the wall at the feast of Balshazzar; I would force them to look up to it, like the “bow in
“ the cloud, as the token of a covenant
“ for perpetual generations.”

We will if you please carry on the fiction a little farther; we will figure to ourselves one of our future kings in the constant habit of receiving unlimited obedience from men, casting a jealous eye towards the stubborn unpliance of the laws. He feels his power, and his mind hesitates. In this state of doubt he seeks for counsel. An honest whig-privy-councillor of that day might I think express himself in terms something like the following: Sire, I should ill repay the confidence

fidence with which your majesty is pleased to honour me if I did not give you my opinion with truth and sincerity. If your majesty will deign to consider your people not as your private property but as a trust committed to your charge, your good sense and the goodness of your heart will I think easily lead you to perceive that you can have no claim to take away or abridge any of their rights or to alter any of their fundamental laws; your majesty knows that the good of the people is the end, the supreme law, the only true foundation of all government. In the excellent constitution of this kingdom it has been carefully provided to separate the *executive* from the *legislative*, because whenever these two powers come to be held by the same hands either directly or indirectly

laws will be made not for the advantage or security of the public, but for the ease or safety or aggrandisement of the governing power. Your majesty possesses in right of your crown the whole of the executive power over your realms in its utmost extent, and as much of the legislative only as is necessary for the preservation of the rights of your crown. For this purpose you are entrusted with a negative voice upon all new laws, but with no power to alter or originate laws because every law being a renunciation of some portion of natural liberty to obtain some advantage at least equivalent to what is given up, this sort of exchange can only be made by the persons to whom the property belongs; by the nation or its agents and representatives. Your majesty
will

will I am sure perceive that it is the positive and immediate duty of these agents to take the utmost care of the interests of their employers, and especially to see that in no case whatsoever more liberty is given up than is fairly purchased by the protection or other advantages obtained in exchange. In the common proceedings of life an agent who should act otherwise would incur that sort of infamy which renders a man unfit for the society of people of character and honour, and this infamy would extend also to any persons of what rank soever who should tamper with these agents, to endeavour to seduce them by personal influence or bribes or threats to give up the rights and properties of their principals upon terms of unequal exchange or for the express purposes

poses of being used to their detriment or annoyance. I will therefore venture humbly to state to your majesty that your rights are strictly confined to the exercise of the executive power and to the simple negation on all proposed laws; and that you have no claim in justice or reason either by yourself or your ministers to govern and direct the legislation.

Having with great humility stated to your majesty what I take to be the *rights* of a king of Great Britain, I will venture to assert that your *interests* exactly coincide with them. To the superior excellence of the government this country is indebted for its superior rank among the nations far above its proportion of numbers or extent. Men are encouraged to every useful exertion by the certainty of enjoying

enjoying the fruits of their industry or
 ingenuity. The arts, the commerce, the
 riches, the prosperity of your majesty's
 people are owing to the security of their
 persons and properties under a free con-
 stitution. Remove this security and ta-
 lents and industry will instantly seek it
 where it is elsewhere to be found.
 Instead of the monarch of a great and
 powerful nation confident against a world
 in arms, holding in your hand the balance
 among the powers of the world, you would
 sink into the petty prince of a petty people.
 the dependent of some great state or the
 confederate of a small one; so that your
 majesty's *greatness* is owing to the in-
 fluence of these very laws now in question
 before us. Nor is the *happiness* of your
 majesty less concerned in the preservation
 of

of the constitution than your greatness. You stand in a situation perhaps unmatched in the relative positions of men. You have unlimited authority to do good and none to do harm ; every faculty to create reverence and love and no power to excite envy or anger ; with less effort than is necessary to fill the lowest offices of life you are secure of a perpetual empire over the hearts of a naturally loyal and generous people. After the *right* and *expediency* we come to consider the point of *fact* ; whether your majesty could with safety to your crown overturn the fundamental laws of the constitution, and I am firmly of opinion that you could not. Though the people are luxurious and profligate and apparently indifferent to public measures, if your majesty's ministers

were

were to put forth their hands and touch any of those laws which the people have been used to consider as the *palladia* of their liberties, another order of things would presently take place. “ It would “ operate as a call upon the nation.” The people would rouse from their lethargy: men would associate and combine and convene; the sound of “ To your tents, O Israel !” would be propagated in low murmurs from the Hebrides to the Land’s End. Your Majesty well knows what passed in 1688, and there is no reason in the world to believe that the same cause would not again produce the same effect. The resistance of the people would indeed be much more easy and direct than it was at that time, because a grand precedent has been established; there is now a leading

case in point ; they have tracts and guide-posts and land-marks which they had not before ; besides the more recent examples of America and France and even Ireland before their eyes. These, Sire, are the opinions of a plain man sincerely attached to your Majesty's person and government, but holding a still stronger bond of attachment to the laws and constitution of my country.

The Tories of that day would not fail to take the opposite ground. They would observe that there is all the difference in the world between obtaining a repeal of these fundamental laws by the good-will and consent of Parliament and endeavouring to carry on government without the aid of Parliament. That liberty may be a fine thing, but that politeness and gal-

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lantry

lantry and loyalty are infinitely finer. That the Revolution about which a few factious republicans make such a rout went much more upon the preservation of the protestant hierarchy of the church of England and the privileges of parliament than upon any nonsensical abstract notions of the *rights of the people*. That if the nation did upon that occasion *seem* to elect a king, they well knew that they were doing what they had no right to do, they did it as if they were ashamed of it, keeping it from the eye with a sort of pick-pocket address, and the moment it was over renouncing any such right in future for ever; that provided the ecclesiastical and civil establishments are preserved, and above all provided the *loaves and fishes* can continue to be distributed so that the

“multitude may eat and be filled” all will be well ; that men are tired of altercation and wish only for enjoyment ; that indeed what has been done in America and France has made people almost sick of the very name of liberty.

Before I conclude let me protest against being misunderstood. I am no abettor of faction. You, Sir, cannot love peace and order and subordination and tranquillity more than I do. Anarchy and confusion and civil discord cannot be more your abhorrence than they are mine*. I only insist that we have *constitutional rights* and *fundamental laws*, all attacks upon which the nation has as much right to

* Nec privatos focos, nec publicas leges, nec libertatis jura cura habere potest, quem discordia, quem cædes civium, quem bellum civile delectat ; cumque ex numero hominum ejeciendum, ex finibus humanæ naturæ exterminandum puto. Cic.

resist as every individual has to repel the force of a highwayman; resistance is no more rebellion in one case than killing is murder in the other. These are extreme cases and require extreme remedies.—Why, Sir, do you call upon us to moot points on these delicate and dangerous topics? The very consideration of them is ominous; it tends to fill the mind with vain fears and false alarms. God avert them from these kingdoms! with very little reliance on human wisdom and virtue we may hope and trust that government will ever be as backward to provoke violence as the people ought to be to recur to it. No man in the world would hear what you so emphatically term “a call of the nation*” with more dread and horror than I should

* Letter to Messrs. Farr and Harris, p. 16.

do.

do. But still I hope I should obey that call if the occasion really demanded it. I am sure if I did not I must for ever after live a coward in mine own esteem.

I was born and nurtured in the old-fashioned despised principles of Whiggism, and in these principles I shall certainly die. They are the prejudices of my infancy confirmed by the reason of my riper age. One of the fundamental articles of the symbol of political faith in which I received my first rudiments of instruction is, that the present Royal Family were *called by the nation* to the throne of these kingdoms to defend and support our religion and liberties and laws; that they have entered into a *solemn contract* to this effect, and *receive the allegiance* of the people upon *these terms* and *these terms* only.

only. In the Declaration of Rights the
 “ people” “ *claim demand and insist upon*”
 “ all and singular the premises as their
 “ *undoubted rights and liberties.*” In the
 Bill of Rights “ all and singular the *rights*
 “ and *liberties asserted and claimed* in the
 “ said Declaration are recognized to be
 “ the true, antient and *indubitable rights*
 “ *of the people.*” In the Act of Settlement
 limiting the crown to the present Royal
 Family, they are declared to be “ the
 “ *birthright* of the people of England.”
 These were the doctrines by which I was
 early taught a loyal attachment to the il-
 lustrious House of Hanover. These were
 the doctrines of the courts of George the
 First and George the Second. They were
 proud to be told that they reigned by the
 free choice of a free people. Hereditary
 right

right and unlimited submission were then the watch-words of faction and rebellion. These, Sir, are the doctrines for which I contend because I believe them to be perfectly constitutional. I go no farther. I suspect I was tempted to answer your letter merely upon account of that passage where you seem to say that the nation abdicated and renounced at the Revolution the right of *claiming demanding and insisting* upon their *undoubted rights and liberties*, the *birthright* of the *people of England* by any future interruption of the succession.

I will now take my leave. It is high time to put an end to this desultory letter already I fear much too long. I will finish as I began with the most sincere assurances of respect and esteem. I think I have seen it somewhere mentioned that you
have

have been or are to be presented with honorary degrees in our universities; and that your work is admired and praised by the highest personages. I sincerely hope something more solid will follow. Honours cannot be placed on a more deserving head or trust committed into purer hands. I am persuaded there is not a man in the nation whose elevation would be received with less envy or more universal approbation. To give a dignified repose to the evening of a life like yours would equally honour the receiving and the conferring hand.

My clients have nothing of this sort to dispose of; they have nothing to give but barren applause; and they commonly bestow that with such incapacity of judgment that a wise man will not be much flattered with the acquisition. There is

Q

indeed

indeed another sort of applause of which I confess myself more ambitious, an applause which the world can neither give nor take away, and which cannot be bought with starts of patriotism or hypocritical grimace ; an applause, Sir, of which I am persuaded no man knows the value better than you do, and which will not fail to gild your setting day with more cheering rays than ever emanated from the smiles of Ministers or Kings, I mean the applause of our own consciences.—Adieu then, good Sir—accept my sincere salutations, and the regard and consideration with which I am

Your faithful and most humble servant.

BROOKE BOOTHBY.

Ashborne Hall,
Dec. 27, 1790.

N O T E.

I N a Letter for which I have to regret that the writer by concealing his name has denied me the pleasure of personally thanking him, it is objected; 1. That the expression (p. 31.) *almost disappears in practice* is too strong a one. If this expression can be understood to imply any approbation of the *rotten boroughs*, or the disgraceful traffic belonging to them, it certainly goes far beyond my meaning; I had no intention in this place to consider the question of representation any otherwise than as furnishing a forcible illustration of this principle of *unity of object and interest* which for a century has been able in a considerable degree to countervail so great and obvious a defect. A wise and temperate reform in the representation, such as derives from the nature and cause of this defect, must surely be considered as a mighty *desideratum* indeed. It would remove a perpetual source

of scandal, and add greatly to the confidence of the people in the legislature: for what must their sentiments be of a continued established proceeding with which a certain set of gentlemen are perfectly well acquainted in their private capacities, and which they are obliged in their congregate character to disavow and abjure the very existence of? A practice so reprobated by principle, that even to mention a government borough or purchased seat within their walls would be deemed a high offence against decency and order. Such a reform would be the safest, the easiest, the most perfectly constitutional way to render those commodities the sale of which is a gross abomination less immediately marketable; and many persons who, have now only to reckon with a banker would then owe some account of their public conduct to real constituents. It would operate also as a check upon the wide-spreading infectious leprosy of Indian influence as well as upon the excessive and increasing influence of the crown. Nor can I conceive one possible argument in reason or justice or expediency on the contrary side. In process
of

of time places which from their opulence or extent were called upon to send representatives to parliament have fallen into decay or ceased to exist; while during the same period other places have risen up to population and commerce: now what in the world can be more just and equitable, or more consonant to the principles of the constitution, than to transfer the representation from decay or non-existence, and to restore it to the numbers and consequence to which it originally and naturally belongs? This is no more than to repair the common inevitable injuries of time, without which every fabric moral or natural must sooner or later be entombed in its own ruins.

On the other hand I acknowledge that my humble opinion is totally averse to all deep reform or new-modelling of the representation to suit it to any abstract theory of a popular assembly*. Perfect theories are seldom applicable to human institutions. We must take men as they are and endeavour to make them what they

* See Dr. Price's Discourse, Appendix, p. 42, 43, 44, Sixth Edition.

should

should be. In practice, experience will ever be preferable to experiment. We know that we have enjoyed liberty and security and prosperity and happiness under the constitution established at the revolution; and that this constitution would be fundamentally changed by introducing a new representation upon pure democratic principles cannot I think be denied. An assembly purely democratic must be actuated by a democratic spirit and governed by democratic principles; and these are not only immiscible with but utterly abhorrent to every thing aristocratic or monarchical; so that instead of a *mixed principle* blended and incorporated with an almost miraculous felicity, by which a beautiful whole has been constructed and sustained, we should be driven back into the chaos of contending elements,

Where hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce
Strive for the mastery, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms.

In this contention, such an assembly once established, disposing exclusively of the public money,

ney, might and therefore would ultimately predominate so as to govern the legislation, whether the dispute came to be decided by the intrinsic weight and consequence of the contending powers or by the sword. Now those who have considered a democracy either in itself or in its operation and process where it has been established will I believe be obliged to allow that it is a form wholly improper for great rich commercial countries. Its very existence depends on a degree of public virtue perhaps no otherwise attainable than by public education absolutely directed to that object. In a nation like this it must instantly degenerate: and bodies of men being just as ambitious of power as the individuals of which they are combined, and advancing to their object with a more firm and determined step, such a national assembly would not be likely to content itself with governing the legislature only; to the power of assuming the executive control the allurements are too strong to allow the inclination to be long wanting; and then the government would fall into the worst kind of oligarchy, such as our own
 history

history furnishes a most notable example of in the sequestrating, treason-making, despotic House of Commons from which the nation rejoiced to be delivered even by the tyranny of Oliver. If such a fundamental change in the representation should ever be effected, the succeeding acts of the drama, I think, would be a contentious turbulent venal democracy ; a pestilent oligarchy ; finally concluding in a military tyranny. This rapid view of so great and extensive a subject, I by no means offer as an adequate elucidation of it, but as a sufficient comment upon the passage objected to. I own myself a lover, perhaps to enthusiasm, of the mild, undomineering, sweet-tempered government to which I feel myself indebted for the security and repose so dear to my heart. I am an earnest well-wisher, and would be more if I had the power or ability to every reform that can tend to strengthen or renovate or amend the laws and the established constitution ; and I feel a proportionate dread and horror of whatever may lead to its subversion, whether proceeding from a venal resignation

nation of the people's rights, or from a fundamental innovation of its principles. If it should be objected that what I have here said seems to contradict what I offer upon the French revolution, I answer that I think it does not. What kind of government the French propose to establish, or what would be the best for them in their given circumstances, I have not ventured to enquire; I have only endeavoured to show that they could not have done what they have been so severely censured for having omitted.

2. The writer of the letter objects that I have spoken too favourably of *parties*. "Party of
 " itself, such as the great division into whig and
 " tory" he considers "rather as an evil"; and
 from the "facility with which it may always
 " be broken up and demolished by the executive
 " power, as an unsafe foundation for the peo-
 " ple to depend upon;" to this I reply, that in
 a mixed government like ours, the division of
 men into those who incline to the monarchical,
 and those who incline to the popular side (in a
 R greater

greater or less degree) will always comprise a very great majority of the nation. It is a division necessarily resulting from difference in temper and education and habit and interest; and though the court may, by perseverance and dextrous management, subdue or buy or garble or dismay parties for the moment they will always rise again into new life whenever the arts are remitted by which they are kept down or confounded; or what is more to the purpose, whenever men are really called upon to declare themselves by any great occasion. From the revolution to about the middle of the last reign, the minds of men seem to have been more violently agitated under the distinctions of whig and jacobite than they afterwards were under those of whig and tory; but the principle was the same; so it is now; and so it will be as long as venality and corruption leave us any principle at all; so that *party*, whether it be a good or an evil, appears to be essentially inherent in the constitution.

As

As to the *use* that ought to be made of parties I have endeavoured to shew that though they form no part of the citadel, they may at least serve as excellent outworks from which a stand may always be made so as to prevent a surprize or *coup de main*: to give time and notice to the garrison to prepare for a more regular defence; and that they present at all times points of union to which every man may repair according to the rule he wishes to take. A tory administration to which I think a bulk of the nation always rather inclines will push that principle with great caution under the eye of a whig opposition.

Whenever they have done otherwise the court has been driven to have recourse to the whigs, whose first act must consistently be to repair the breaches complained of; thus, for instance, the abuse of power in Mr. Wilkes's business produced a whig ministry which presently delivered us from general warrants, seizure of papers, unconstitutional elections, &c.

That the motive of party is not pure patriotism I am ready to allow ; but I contend that it is a motive favourable to liberty and the constitution. To suppose as the writer of the letter seems to do, that men will take a very active part in public affairs from the mere love of virtue alone certainly does honour to the vigour of his own mind and the purity of his own sentiments, but will I fear hardly stand the test of experience ; at least in times like the present. The highest effort of political skill is to create new circumstances, and the second to make the best use of those which exist ; to engage the passions and interests of men on the side of public virtue. A principle therefore which leads to this purpose, as I think that of parties in this country does, ought in my opinion to be cherished and sustained. The most happy coincidence for human virtue, is the union of duty and interest, as “ lead us not into temptation ” is the best adapted prayer. *Idem sentire de republicâ* has always been a powerful and legitimate bond of union. Parties connect men in

one

one common cause by the strong ties of honour and advantage. They moderate the violent and stimulate the indifferent; they animate the good and restrain the wicked, and furnish one of the few remaining barriers to general corruption; for the man who would very willingly barter away his principle if he had any cannot desert his party without such an open dereliction of reputation as renders him not worth a great price and for which a moderate one offers no compensation.

It now remains for me to take the only method I have to offer the liberal and ingenious writer my best thanks for the obliging tenour of his letter and for his acceptable present from which I have received instruction as well as amusement. Except the tract attributed to Lord Somers (of the authenticity of which I should be glad to be satisfied), I confess with some shame the contents were all new to me; as are at this moment the numerous answers to Mr. Burke's treatise. After the middle of life we are apt to consider our minds as made up on certain points, and to
emancipate

emancipate ourselves from the trouble of all future enquiry ; and this perhaps is an allowable indulgence as far as regards ourselves, but when we take upon us to instruct the public it becomes a duty to labour for every possible information. Dr. Price's discourse which I ought to have read sooner, is, I think, replete with the most humane sentiments and the purest precepts of toleration ; precepts which nothing but the insolence of established folly could ever have dared to name in contempt *dissenting opinions*. Universal doctrines, from which those who would confine men by absurd and ill-invented forms, and not those who profess, ought properly to be called *dissenters*. Can it be the true interest of religion to preserve those forms that tend to cast a ridicule upon the most sacred things, which by the young and light-minded will be considered as naturally belonging to them ? Can any body doubt, but that a shorter and more rational form of prayer, rid of the remains of popery with which the minds of the men who formed our tautologous pharisaical Liturgy, so contrary to the direct precept of

Christ,

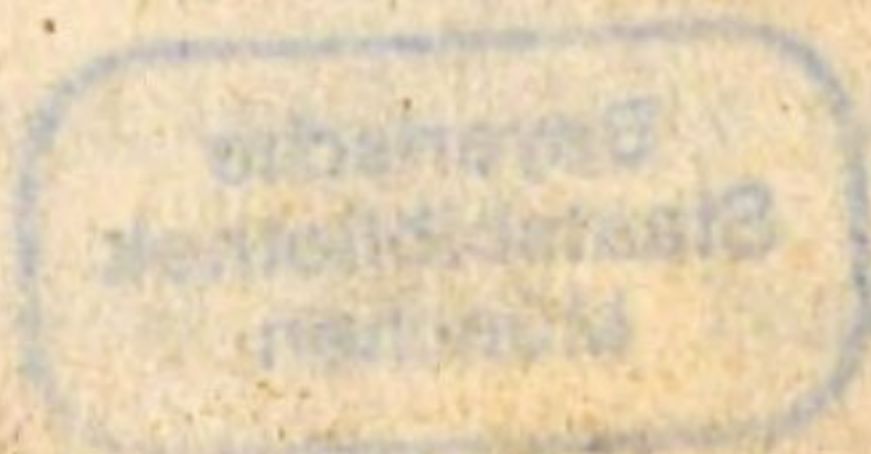
Christ, were still embrued? such a form as all honest christians might heartily join in, would serve to encrease the respect for religion? What is there in common between our supplications and thanksgivings to God and our idle disputes and vain opinions? Let us at least lay aside these proud contentions when we meet to humble ourselves before his throne.

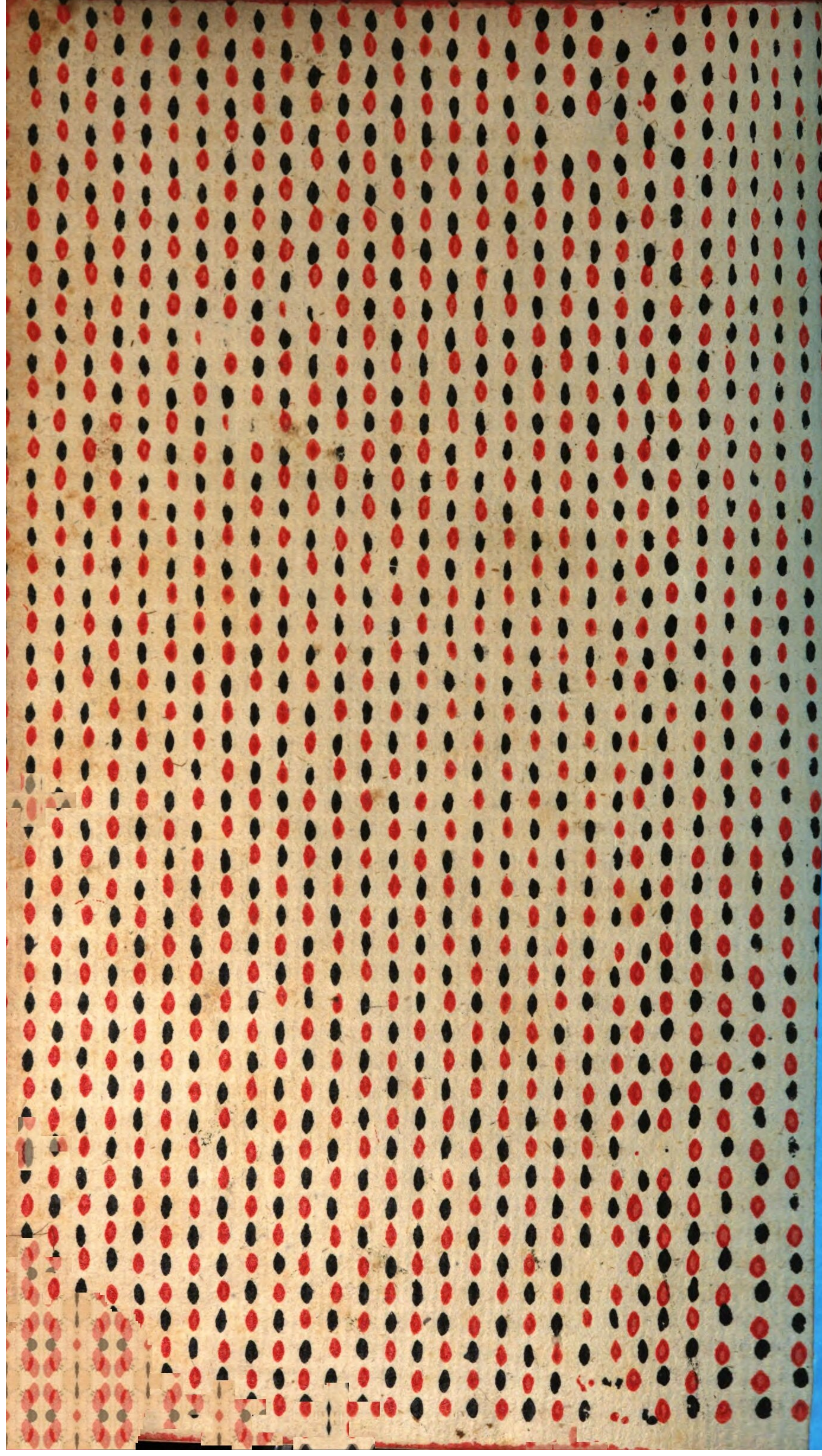
F I N I S.

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Christ, were all combined? and a form as all
 honest Christians might heartily join in would
 serve to facilitate the respect for religion? What
 is there in common between our superstitions
 and thanksgivings to God and our idle disputes
 and vain opinions? Let us at least lay aside
 these proud contentions when we meet to humble
 ourselves before his throne.

F I N I S





A letter to the right honourable Edmund Burke

London 1791

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